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ABSTRACT

Macrocosmic and microcosmic perspectives are employed in this ethnographic study of a La Leche League mothering/breastfeeding group in Buffalo, New York, in order to place the group in its historical perspective and cultural context and to describe its structure as a small cultural system. The first section provides an historical overview of mothering in American society in the attempt to present a brief background for understanding the group's context in present-day culture. A rationale for the study is presented in the second section, as well as a brief introduction to the methodology of the "well-grounded" ethnography which this study employs to produce an emic structural analysis. The remaining three sections describe the ethnography itself. The third section, "Getting Oriented," specifically discusses the arena in which the study took place, the interconnecting sets of scenes, and the focal breastfeeding group. The fourth section describes in detail the focal group's microstructure in terms of participants' classification of activities, persons, and environs. The fifth section is concerned with a wider arena, the mass forces acting upon the scene and their effect on the life careers of its members. Further consideration of the social structure under construction and the implications and use of the methodology is given in a concluding footnote. (RH)

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LEARNING HOW TO MOTHER:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF AN URBAN BREASTFEEDING GROUP

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presented at the
80th Annual Meeting of the
American Anthropological Society
Los Angeles, California
December 3-6, 1981

by
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INTRODUCTION

This study represents an attempt to draw together many threads from several different perspectives in order to shed light on a La Leche League mothering/breastfeeding group in Buffalo, New York. The first section of this paper is an historical overview of mothering in American society. It is an attempt to present a brief, but sufficient background for understanding the group's context in our present day culture. A rationale for the study is presented in the second section, as well as a brief introduction to the methodology of "well-grounded ethnography" (Gearing ms) which this study employs, resulting in (behavioral) emic structural analysis. The remaining sections represent the ethnography itself. The "Getting Oriented" section describes the arena, the interconnecting sets of scenes and the scene itself--the breastfeeding group. Section IV describes the scene's microstructure in detail. Classes of activity, persons, and environs are described and routines are mapped. The names of the group members have been changed in order to preserve their privacy. Likewise, the exact area of Buffalo and the particular La Leche group studied is not identified. Section V is concerned again with a wider arena, the mass forces acting upon the scene and their effect on the life careers of its members. In the Footnote, I describe some other things to be considered: the structure under construction, and the implications and uses of the methodology.

By switching from the macrocosm to the microcosm and then moving back out to the macrocosm again, I have attempted to place this breastfeeding group in its proper historical and wider cultural context as well as to

describe it structurally as a small cultural system. While this task is an ominous one, I hope the threads I have drawn together will contribute in some way to a greater understanding of mothering in our society, the crux of social structure.

SECTION I

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MOTHERING IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

As mammals, humans have relied on breastfeeding their infants for millions of years, but for several centuries, other means of infant feeding have also been used. Royal and upper class women were often able to pay wet nurses to feed their infants for them, thus enabling them to become involved in other activities. Often, these wet nurses practiced infanticide so that they could be sure of an ample milk supply with which to nurse the children of the upper classes. The practice of employing wet nurses, as well as that of feeding infants animal milk are recorded in the world's bibles. Nonetheless, these practices were the exception and not the rule. The general population of women often worked together cooperatively by resorting to group nursing in times of need. When a mother was unable to nurse or when she died, the other women would pass the infant around amongst themselves (Raphael 1973:48-49).

The vast majority of women throughout history have spent most of their adult lives in some phase of the childbearing, feeding, and rearing cycle, relying on complete breastfeeding for up to two or three years or more to meet the infant's nutritional needs. It was during the nineteenth century, beginning with the Industrial Revolution, that things changed significantly for women, as well as for society as a whole.

Significant Nineteenth Century Developments

The nineteenth century brought several significant developments which had a profound effect on women and on society as a whole. Perhaps the most significant of these developments was the breakdown of the extended family to the independent nuclear family household which accompanied the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, and rapid social change. Childrearing and infant feeding practices stem to a large extent from the size of the family and tend to reflect the culture and its values. This breakdown of extended family households meant a breakdown in the cultural continuity of traditions. Families became more isolated and women turned to their peers for the appropriate modeling behaviors. This reliance on peers paved the way for the introduction of new methods of mothering and infant feeding.[1]

The vulcanization of rubber, invented in 1843, also had a profound effect. For one thing, it meant that for the first time a safe contraceptive device could be mass produced. This brought about a revolution in birth control which was to have a dramatic effect on women in the twentieth century, making it possible for them to venture away from their homes and into the world of work and to a multitude of other roles. The invention of the vulcanization of rubber also made possible the mass production of rubber baby bottle nipples. Now, infants could be fed artificially so that it was far easier for women of the early twentieth century to reach outside their homes. Now that the bottle was available, the previously indispensible tie between a mother and her infant was severed. The bottle came to symbolize modernity and liberation.

There were problems with bottle feeding and many infants died from contaminated milk. Terrible sanitary conditions in general from the cows to

to the transport of the milk, coupled with the conditions of industrial society: overcrowding, disease, and isolation, all contributed to a high infant death rate. Vaccines and a reliable delivery system helped, but it was not until the mass production of electric and gas refrigerators after World War II that artificial feeding was safe.

As the grandmother was slowly disappearing from the household, women's own mothers were becoming second generation bottle feeders. In only a few decades, the knowledge and traditions of breastfeeding were being lost, so that if women did want to breastfeed, their mothers were less able to teach them. The new trend was for a daughter/mother to achieve independence and freedom for herself, bringing about greater isolation and total dependence by infants on their parents. There was no grandmother to fill in. The void created by the loss of the grandparent generation was to be filled by a reliance on doctors and books as the new authorities. This culture of young adults, many of whom were immigrants and were not with their parents, had to rely on other sources for learning the skills required for their new lifestyles. Mass literacy and the growing trend of relying on physicians as authority figures was the beginning of a switch to new and different methods of childrearing. (Raphael 1973:47-51).

Mothering and Family Change Since the 1960's

The 1960's has often been characterized as a decade of youth revolt and activism. In Culture and Commitment, Mead discusses the conditions leading up to this youth revolt in her attempt to explain the worldwide generation gap. There was an emergence of a world community, united by shared knowledge and danger. The replacement of cruder forms of energy by the Industrial Revolution helped to multiply agricultural production and

dangerously modify the ecology of our planet. Computer technology concentrated intellectual efforts and opened the way for simulations which could transcend earlier intellectual accomplishments. The medical revolution brought population increases and released women from a lifetime of almost complete reproductivity. These changes took place simultaneously, within a single generation, and with a worldwide impact of knowledge of the change. There were were no models for people entering this new age; they had to make their own tenative adaptations and innovations. They were like immigrants in time in an age that was different than any that had come before it (Mead 1978:67-72).

By the 1960's, a new pattern of womanhood had emerged; marriage and motherhood were now tightly integrated with work. Feminist consciousness erupted, giving rise to the founding of the National Organization of Women in 1966, the first feminist organization since the era of suffrage (Ryan 1975:223-24). Feminist consciousness also erupted on college campuses. Many of these college women were daughters of middle-aged women who were returning to work in large numbers. While many of these mothers had dropped out of high school during the Depression and had rarely attended college, their daughters had high school diplomas, and one-third of them had gone on to college. Consequently, marriages were being delayed.

Students on American college campuses were fighting for the civil rights of Blacks, denouncing the war in Vietnam, and participating in the ideological stirrings which were defining America's new left. These college students were searching out alternatives and trying to find new and better ways to adapt to a changing world. Drugs were experimented with freely. There was an interest in philosophies, teachings, and religions of the East.

Alternative lifestyles were tried out. Communes became popular for some, and many young people began trying out new types of relationships. There was an increase in couples who lived together without the traditional marriage ceremony. Sexual freedom and experimentation was at a new height with the mass availability of birth control pills and other contraceptives. A back-to-nature type movement gained momentum, evidenced by an increased awareness of nutrition and exercise. Health food stores, yoga, and herbal medicines grew more and more popular. There was a move toward homesteading and towards self-sufficiency. Cooperative food stores and other cooperative efforts were flourishing by the 1970's. The popular culture of the times reflected these trends in its music, literature and art.

Even though many women were now integrated into the labor force, they still did not have much economic or political power, exemplified by the lack of sucess in passing the Equal Rights Ammendment. The vast majority of women with small children still stayed home to care for them, but families were getting smaller and most women were bearing their last child before they were twenty-five. Women who were returning to the labor force during the 1970's were still spending about thirty hours a week on domestic chores. Restaurants and day care centers helped ease things some, but a rearrangement of family roles was still necessary. Not all males responded positively to the added emotional demands, however, and the amount of domestic violence, wife beating, and rape increased dramatically (Ryan 1975:230-34).

One response to the tension of the times was the further breakdown of the family. Divorce rates increased rapidly and female-headed households and households containing a married couple and the children of only one partner increased significantly. More and more people were choosing to stay single and live apart from their relatives. Welfare services, which

had the effect of making the government a sort of surrogate father were increased; this created a special sex/caste of female government dependants. (Ryan 1975:235-40).

In the 1970's, for the first time in history, motherhood was considered by some to be anti-social, a form of pollution in an already overpopulated world. The social context of childbearing had become negative for some, and justification had to be found for using one's fertility (Kitsinger 1978:19).

The role of doctors, hospitals, and other "experts" had made significant inroads into the family sphere. Mothers increasingly relied on books and other written materials for information that had previously been handed down from generation to generation. Mothers in the 1970's were for the most part physically isolated and immobile in their homes, often alone all day long with only the concentrated tasks of baby care: cleaning, washing, bathing, and feeding, and acculturation. The major tasks of the American family had become the successful rearing of two or at the most three children (Kitsinger 1978:21;28).

Male doctors had almost exclusively taken over control of the childbirth process, which had become depersonalized and mechanized.

> The history of childbirth can be viewed as a gradual attempt by man to extricate the process of birth from a woman and call it his own. . . . Man placed woman on her back in labour, then knocked her senseless with anaesthesia. And it was man who, throughout history, did it all in the name of 'saving woman from her own body.' (Arms IN Kitsinger 1978:74).

The bonding process between mothers and babies is not taking place as it should because of the intervention of anaesthesia and hospitals. Many

times, the mother and baby are separated for long intervals immediately following birth, and mothers who want to breastfeed are finding it difficult to accomplish. There is now a growing trend in this country towards women helping each other through the pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing process. Self-help groups are increasing in popularity, as are natural childbirth classes, the use of midwives and of home births. Many women want to regain control of their bodies and of their lives by re-learning the old traditions and by building up traditions of their own, mostly through peer modeling.

SECTION II

RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

American society has undergone extreme and rapid social change in the last few decades. Margaret Mead was the first cultural anthropologist to study female-related topics, and she made significant contributions to our understanding of the effects of this rapid social change, primarily upon personality. In this study, I am using Mead's concepts of postfigurative, cofigurative and prefigurative societies. A postfigurative society, generally a primitive culture in the modern world, is one in which three generations are present, and where models are provided in the household so that traditions and behaviors tend to repeat themselves over time. A cofigurative society, generally a modern state or a dependent native people or peasant society under the control of a modern state, is one in which only two generation households are present. The grandparents have been removed due to severe cultural change. Hence, peer modeling is prevalent and there are no closed, narrow ethnic communities or close cousin ties. The break in the postfigurative system comes about through a catastrophe which decimates most of the older members, through the development of new forms of technology in which the old are not expert, following migration to a new land, after a military conquest where people are incorporated into the conqueror's culture, through massive religious conversion or as a step in a revolution that introduces new and different lifestyles for the young. This switch from extended family households to independent nuclear family households is seen as the defining criteria. It is the resulting break in cultural and generational continuity

that makes new styles of learning a necessity. Where three generations are present, the older members of the household model behaviors for the younger members; with only two generations present, modeling is done primarily by peers. It is because of this peer modeling that new and different lifestyles are adopted, including new infant feeding practices. Further, Mead sees nativistic, revolutionary, or utopian cults arising later which attempt to establish a more desired way of life. Mead's answer to the generation gap is what she calls prefigurative culture. Prefiguration is where children model their newly learned behaviors and adaptations for their parents.

Following Mead's concepts, American society is viewed as cofigurative, moving on its way to prefigurative. We have come from a three generation society where our grandparents modeled the culturally appropriate behaviors, to a society made up of two generation independent nuclear families and families with only one parent present, in which modeling is based on peers and information and knowledge has to be gotten from books and from specialists of various sorts. This pattern of cofiguration reached a peak in the 1960's, becoming a fully institutionalized phenomenon, and creating a world-wide youth culture. The cultural continuity between generations was severed and new ways of living and of adapting had to be found.

It is at the point of recent breakdown of postfigurative societies, according to Mead, that nativistic cults (or revitalistic movements) flourish (Mead 1978:61;79). By studying and analysing this phenomenon, an understanding of the process of coping with and adapting to the rapidly changing circumstances of our society should result. The group which this study analyzes is viewed as a modern-day revitalistic movement, rising in the 1950's as a reaction against the childrearing trends of the times and gaining momentum in the 1960's when a new generation of mothers joined its ranks.

At the heart of social change is the family. Traditionally, one of a woman's most important roles has been to disseminate culture through mothering. It is through the family that we have preserved our learned humanity. The breakdown of the family is now occuring in our society, and other cultures of the world have also been dramatically affected by the rapid social change of the last few decades.

The product of this study is an ethnography which describes a mothering/breastfeeding group (La Leche League International) in Buffalo, New York. The group represents an example of how mothers in our society are adapting to the strains and stresses of urbanization, isolation, and rapid social change. They are reacting against the breakdown of the family, and of the link between their babies and themselves. They are attempting to rebuild a tradition of breastfeeding and of total mothering, through self-support and through peer modeling.

The study follows a method of "well-grounded ethnography" (Gearing ms), which seeks to describe the group as a small (whole) cultural system. The result is a (behavioral) emic structural analysis of the culture of the group as that culture is enacted in their actual behavior. Whenever the same people frequently come together in the same place for the same purposes, their small cultural system or "scene" is classified by them into classes of things. Each public action is identified as a member of a class of acts, performed by a member of a class of persons, within a class of environs. These classes of activity, persons, and environs have structural relationships to each other. To describe the group as a small, whole system is to describe this structure in terms of the participants' classes of things.

Certain businesses-at-hand are accomplished through the joint actions and interactions of the group members, which are given form and regularity

by the structure. The primary business-at-hand in this cultural system is "learning how to mother" by peer modeling, which is based on how they interact with each other within a hierarchy of classes of persons. It is a cyclical process progressing from a pregnant woman or new mother who needs a lot of support and encouragement to an experienced mother who can start contributing some support, encouragement, and knowledge to others. At the top of the hierarchy of classes of persons, the leaders compete in a sense to be the "best" mother. The process of movement through these classes of persons describes the patterns of interaction which regularly occur in this setting, that of learning how to mother.

Through the study and (behavioral) emic analysis of social structure, particularly the changing institutions of the family and of motherhood, an understanding can be gained of the regularities of human behavioral patterns which are pivotal to the organization of everyday life. The end product sought by this method of "well-grounded ethnography" is . . .

> . . . absolute (not probablistic) predictive knowledge about the commonplace behaviors which organize everyday life in some community, everyday life as it was in the recent past, and as it now is, and as it will be in the near future. . . . the end product is a description which predicts that <u>structures</u> will be acted out, that behaviors which are <u>structurally appropriate</u> will unfold (Gearing ms:pr. 2-3).

The methodology endeavors to describe the macrostructure as well as the microstructure of this small cultural system or scene. The investigation moves out and maps the connections and patterns of movements between scenes by delineating those scenes which are connected through the accomplishment of certain tasks, or scenes which have accountability or space relationships to each other and to the primary scene under analysis.

It is assumed that the structure of this cultural system is like the structure of other similar systems; hence, an understanding of it yields insights which are not limited by the boundaries of the group at hand. Further, an understanding of a scene or small cultural system at these structural levels allows one to observe the 'structure under construction.' As members come in to the group and are initiated through the process of "newcomer" to "old hand," the structure changes. An understanding of the structure at these levels also allows the design and implementation of intervention strategies, which can be used to improve the chances of accomplishing the given buisinesses-at-hand.

SECTION III

GETTING ORIENTED

This investigation focusses on a breastfeeding group (La Leche League) in Buffalo, New York. Their manifest purpose is to provide help and encouragement, primarily through personal instruction, to mothers who want to nurse their babies. But women who join the group are learning much more than the mechanics of breastfeeding per se: they are participating in a cultural system which promotes and teaches a type of total mothering based on a set of specific values, traditions, and ideals. The mothers who belong to this group are learning how to mother and to be mothers and are then passing it on to others as the group is repopulated and as they are successfully integrated into the group.

The process of learning how to mother describes the underlying nature of the group as well as describes something about the underlying nature of a wider arena. This breastfeeding group, as a part of a large urban area, is one group of many which are connected in various ways, and which together form a larger cultural system. This investigation focusses on learning how to mother in one breastfeeding group in one section of Buffalo, New York, but it is assumed that similar processes are occuring in other similar groups elsewhere, such that an understanding of how women are learning to mother in this group will hopefully yield insights into our larger society in general.

The members of this group are women roughly between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who all live in one general area within Buffalo's

urban bounds. Most are married or have been living with their "spouses" for several years. Several of the mothers are single parents, many of whom rely on welfare to feed themselves and their children. Only one of the members works at a full-time job outside her home, and one other has a part-time job. Working outside the home is strongly discouraged by the group. In fact, one cannot become a leader if there was a period of mother-baby separation during the first two years of the baby's life. The neighborhoods encompassed by the area can be described generally as "lower middle-class," and are populated by a lot of college students and younger families.

Some unstated assumptions acted out whenever the group comes together are: the conditions of our society makes it difficult, if not impossible, for women to learn how to mother correctly without the support and assistance of other experienced and successful mothers. Further, some women are better mothers than others and so provide better models and have more to contribute to those who are inexperienced.

The Arena, Interconnecting Sets of Scenes, and the Scene Described

The first stage of the ethnographic investigation is to "get oriented." It is an unhurried process of informal observations and conversations which result in a mapping out of the general arena, the sets of scenes which are interconnected in some way or another, and an idea about what purposes and activities take place within some of the scenes.

The arena in which this study takes place is composed actually of several neighborhoods, but the members of the group have specific "territory" in common. Two natural foods cooperatives are situated within the area; most

of the mothers buy their food there and participate in the various activities surrounding the "Coop" which reach out into the community. There is a community center and a bookstore which are also frequented by the women. Many of the people and families who live in the area are part of the "natural" foods and lifestyle movement, and they all are frequent participants at these same places.

There are other breastfeeding groups in the city and its suburbs, each drawing members from its own area. All these groups formally report to a district supervisor for the region, who in turn reports to the international headquarters in Chicago where all major policies and decisions are made. The headquarters also coordinates regional and international workshops and conferences on occasion, which the members of the various groups can attend.

Occasionally the two groups nearest each other join together for special meetings centering on toddlers, or designed for couples or for fathers only. Also the leaders and League Mothers (more experienced mothers) from the two proximal groups join together to hold "Chapter Meetings" where strategies for the future and for combined group meetings are planned.

Before they enter the breastfeeding group itself, women usually follow a similar pattern of participation in specific scenes in the larger community. This pattern of participation follows the cycle of pregnancy and childbirth. Many of the women have the same obstetricians and pediatricians, which is one place where they may first learn about the breastfeeding group. Most of them attend one of the two or three types of natural childbirth classes that are available in the community, and many of them have their babies at a local hospital, although quite a few have had their babies at home. Also, there are other types of mothering groups in the area that some of the women also belong to.

The breastfeeding group itself meets once a month to discuss four general, categorical topics and the problems and concerns related to these topics. These four topics rotate, one per meeting for a series of four meetings. The topics are: The Advantages of Breastfeeding to Mother and Baby; The Art of Breastfeeding and Overcoming Difficulties; Baby Arrives: The Family and the Breastfed Baby; and, Nutrition and Weaning. Each series of four meetings is held at the home of one of the League Mothers. They start at 8:30 pm and are usually over by 10:30 or 11:00 pm. There are approximately 12 members who attend on a regular basis, and another 4 or 6 who come off and on. Additionally, there are always new people who attend the meetings which usually total 14 to 18.

Mothers attending the meetings bring their nursing infants and their toddlers usually come also. Consequently, there is a lot of activity going on at the meetings. The toddlers play in the same room, making their share of noise, with the mothers feeding their infants and looking on, getting up when the need arises to take a toddler to the bathroom, to get a drink, or to keep him or her from doing something potentially harmful or dangerous.

The group has two leaders. The main leader is responsible for conducting the meetings and the discussions, and has been doing so for about two years. The other leader is more or less a "back up." She contributes to the discussions and leads the meetings when the main leader is unable to. Leaders' other duties include being available for phone calls from mothers who have questions or problems, reporting regularly to the area co-ordinator, keeping up to date by reading the organization's materials, preparing future applicants for leadership, maintaining contact with other

leaders through local, chapter, and state functions, and supervising the finances and records of the group. Occasionally, a leader is also asked to represent the organization by speaking to various community audiences.

There is also an appointed librarian/treasurer who takes care of the lending library and collects and keeps track of the dues. The hostess arranges the snacks and drinks that people bring to the meeting while they are arriving.

The organization has ten concepts which are shared as a basic philosophy by the members.[2] Mothering through breastfeeding is considered to be the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying a baby's needs. Mother-infant separation during the period of suckling is discouraged to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply. The baby has a basic need for its mother's love and presence which is as intense as the need for food. Hence, working outside the home is discouraged. Breastmilk is considered to be the superior infant food. In fact, a healthy, full-term baby needs only breastmilk until it shows signs of needing solids, usually about six months after birth. Breastfeeding is encouraged until the baby outgrows the need on its own. Alert, active participation by the mother in childbirth is encouraged to help get breastfeeding off to a good start. The father's role in the breastfeeding relationship is that of provider, protector, helpmate, and companion to the mother. By supporting her he enables her to mother the baby more completely. Good nutrition, meaning eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods as close to their natural state as possible is preferred. Finally, the ideal for discipline of children is one based on "loving guidance." The motto of the organization has become, "good mothering through breastfeeding." Most

of the regular members of the group eat natural diets; many are vegetarians, and cow's milk has negative connotations in general, and is not consumed at all by some of them.

A lot of people come to the meetings to make friends and to seek out other women who are in a similar situation. They talk about how lonely and alienating motherhood can be if there's no one to support and encourage them, especially for the single mothers. The married mothers talk about the difficulties of incorporating babies into the husband/wife relationship. They say that their husband's support is necessary, and almost all of them have at one time or another talked about ways of getting more cooperation from their husbands. Being totally devoted to babies and breastfeeding on demand means that husbands have to get accustomed to sharing a lot of their time with the baby or babies. That also means sleeping alone and/or having a baby or babies (and even toddlers) in bed, and making sure that the baby(ies) and mother are taken care of. Often, the mothers talk about a certain competition between their husbands and babies. There is also the realm of sexuality which changes for both parents with the arrival of a baby. Mothers find that to practice this type of mothering requires a lot of support and encouragement from other group members because society as a whole is often negative and disapproving towards them. Most of the regular member/mothers breastfeed their babies for about two years, some more, some less. Mothers of toddlers who are still breastfeeding also need information, support, and encouragement from the group.

The main leader of the group believes in subtlety in getting across the ideals and concepts of the organization. She tries to present material in such a way that new people won't be "turned off" by it. She also believes

in trying to be accepting of various lifestyles and values that normally couldn't be within the range of what is promoted by the organization. She thinks these people can gradually be 'brought around' by setting an example and by subtle discussions rather than by the preaching of a right and wrong way to do things. She doesn't believe in pushing people, just being there when they need her. She said that sometimes she gets to feeling like the group is just a silly social club until she sees women who are really changed and affected.

The meetings are highly structured and always proceed in the same way. Members start arriving at about 8:15 and socialise with the others until the meeting starts about 8:45. They put any food they have brought with them away, some look through the lending library, breastfeed their babies, and talk to each other about health and baby-related matters. The meeting always starts with a formal introduction by the leader where she talks about the organization. This formal introduction usually includes information about the organization's history, philosophy, purposes, the series topics, the library and dues. A sign-up sheet is always passed around. Then the leader introduces the topic for the evening, usually by making a few comments about it and asking everyone to introduce themselves and their children and to give a "helpful hint" or to make a specific comment about the topic. A lively discussion then gets going, sometimes after the leader makes a few more comments and asks some questions. Usually about 10:00, the leader ends the discussion and everyone socializes and talks in small informal groups for a half hour or longer before going home. The leaders and league mothers often make use of this time to talk to mothers who have specific problems or questions in more detail.

Negative comments are not encouraged by the leaders. They try to create a positive, supportive environment where members can see examples of happy babies and well-adjusted mothers. During the evaluation meetings, which usually take place three days after the regular meetings, the leaders and the League mothers discuss in detail how the meeting went, for example, who needed help and didn't get it, how the interactions could have been improved, and what went wrong, if anything. Then they plan strategies for the next meeting, and usually end up having a more in-depth discussion of the meeting's topic, gearing it to their own needs rather than to those of the newer, more inexperienced people. In addition to the regular meetings and the evaluation meetings, members get together occasionally for potlucks and other social events.

At the end of the getting oriented stage, the assumptions formulated earlier did seem to describe patterns in the community as a whole as well as patterns in the meetings of the group itself. The group members were learning how to mother by mothering each other in a sense during the course of the meetings of the breastfeeding group.

SECTION IV

DESCRIBING MICROSTRUCTURES

Classes of Things: Activity, Persons, Environs

Earlier it was said that whenever the same people frequently come together in the same place for the same purposes, their cultural system or "scene" is classified by them into classes of things. Each public action is identified by the participants as a member of a class of acts, performed by a member of a class of persons, within a class of environs. These classes of things have structural relationships to each other. In this second stage of investigation, the principal elements in these classes of things will be identified, and the structure of the scene will be described in terms of how the participants have classified things in their small cultural system. It is presumed that these classes of things have been "agreed upon" by the members in such a way that when any member does a certain thing, the other members see it as a piece of a larger and familiar activity. The ethnographer can observe the regularities within the group, analytically describe these and then predict how activities will regularly unfold. Because of the nature of this type of investigation and of the small cultural systems which are the objects of its study, each scene must be investigated independently; ideally, at least three interconnecting scenes will be analysed in an ethnography of this kind.

This present study will examine some of the recurring events in the regular meetings of the breastfeeding group. The first task at hand is to

identify the series of activities which unfold at a given meeting. The stream of activity that makes up a meeting is made up of familiar segments and sub-segments which are recognised by the participants. Likewise, the participants "sort" themselves into classes of persons whenever they are together and they use certain classes of environs when involved in their activities. These classes of persons and of environs are also identified.

Secondly, the structural relationships among the classes of activity are discovered and schematically mapped. The same is done for classes of person and classes of environs. When these relationships have been mapped separately, the three structures are joined together, resulting in a description of the scene as a single microstructure. This underlying microstructure will describe any particular meeting of the breastfeeding group.

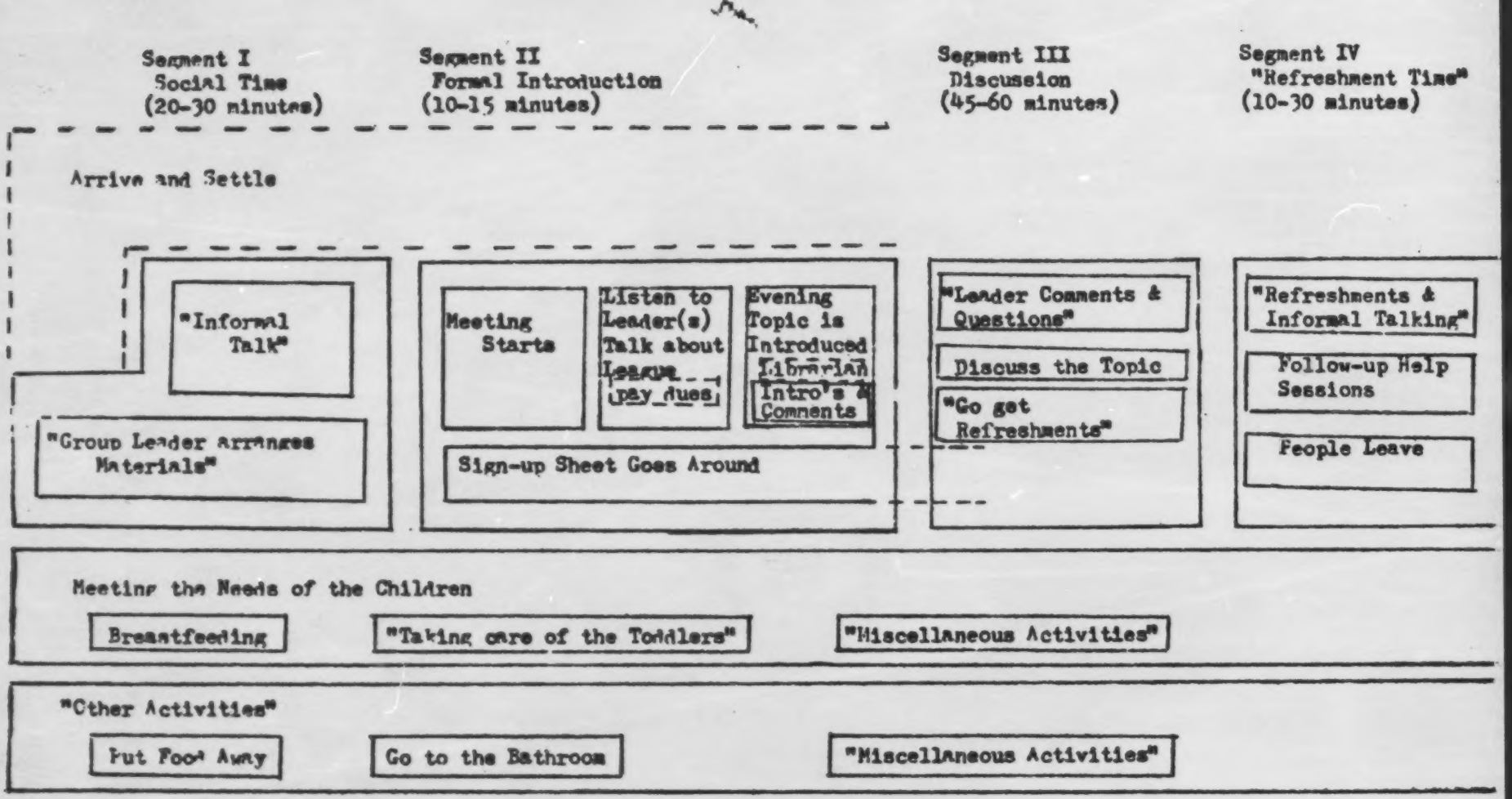
These classes of things are discovered from transcripts which are derived from eliciting sessions with a member of the group who acts as an informant. During the first eliciting session, the informant is asked to describe the activities of the scene as a whole from beginning to end, and to specifically describe the activities of one of the segments which is tenatively identified beforehand by the ethnographer as being of particular interest for later use in identifying "routines." Analysis of the transcript resulting from this first elicitation results in the identification of verbal allusions to classes of activity, of persons, and of environs; clues to the structural relations among the classes are also identified. After recording each allusion to a class of activity, person, or environ on cards, the ethnographer conducts a follow-up elicitation with the informant to resolve discrepancies and to map the structural relationships within each class. Secondly, the ethnographer prepares a "narrative account" derived from an

intensive observation of a meeting of the scene as it unfolds from beginning to end. Analysis of this narrative account will yield enactments of many of the same classes of things and the structural relations among the classes. Where there are unresolved discrepancies, the acted-out classes rather than those just talked about are considered to be the valid ones.

The stream of activities which is jointly enacted by the participants in this breastfeeding group are not perceived by them to be continuous, although it is made up of familiar segments. These segments are seen to occur in a specific order, and some are seen as parts of larger segments of activity. By comparing the verbal allusions to these segments and sub-segments which were derived from the transcript of the elicitation session to the actual behaviors observed and recorded in the narrative accou... the ethnographer can describe these segments and sub-segments and the structural relations between them; the scene can be described as an activity system.

The scene described as such an activity system follows. The phrases which are in quotation marks are my labellings, the others are the labellings of the group participants. The outline is read from left to right. Dotted lines indicated that the sub-segment is optional, and so does not always take place.

THE SCENE DESCRIBED AS AN ACTIVITY SYSTEM



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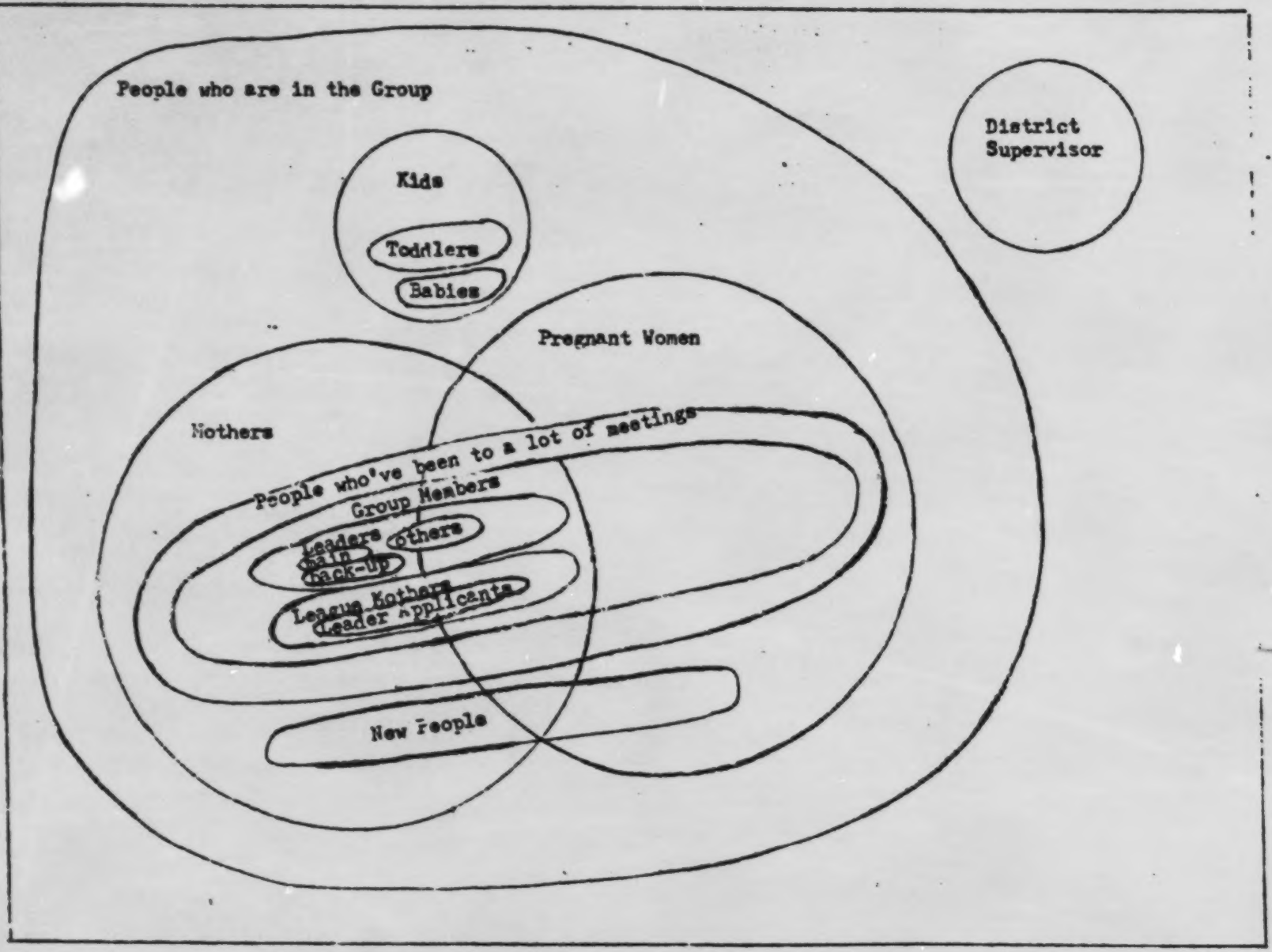
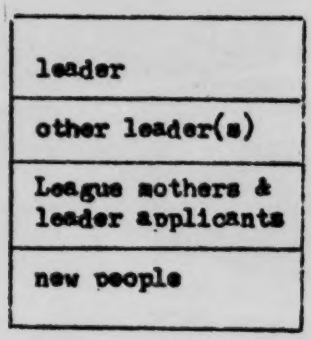
The people who regularly meet together for this breastfeeding group sort and re-sort themselves into classes of persons. There are two leaders, one is the main leader, the other a "back-up" leader. Sometimes other leaders, usually from other groups, also attend the meetings. The organization encourages a group to have three leaders, but this group only has two. The mothers divide themselves into groups, some are League mothers--they have been to at least a series of four meetings (usually a lot more) and are practicing the philosophy of the organization. One of the League mothers is the hostess (they take turns), and one is the librarian/treasurer. A League mother who wants to become a leader becomes a leader applicant by beginning a series of correspondences with the district supervisor. She is still a League mother, but also a leader applicant. There are also pregnant women who attend the meetings; they are also usually new people, except for League mothers and/or leaders who may be pregnant. Then there are the kids: some are toddlers, some are babies. These various labels can be learned from the elicitation sessions as well as by observing the group.

Further breakdowns are also apparent after the ethnographer has observed the interactional behaviors for awhile. The main leader often makes distinctions between the League mothers and leader applicants in regard to which she feels will make better leaders, and in regard to which she feels are better mothers. These mothers which the leader 'prefers' will be called "prospective leaders," since a leader must sponsor a mother who wants to become a leader applicant. In one case, a prospective leader was made the librarian/treasurer. Further, there is some competition between the League mothers and especially among the leaders to be the "best mother."

A diagram showing the classes of persons as perceived by the participants follows.


People who are in the Group
District Supervisor
Kids
Toddlers
Babies
Pregnant Women
Mothers
People who've been to a lot of meetings
Group Members
Leaders
Others
Main
Back-up
League Mothers
Leader Applicants
New People

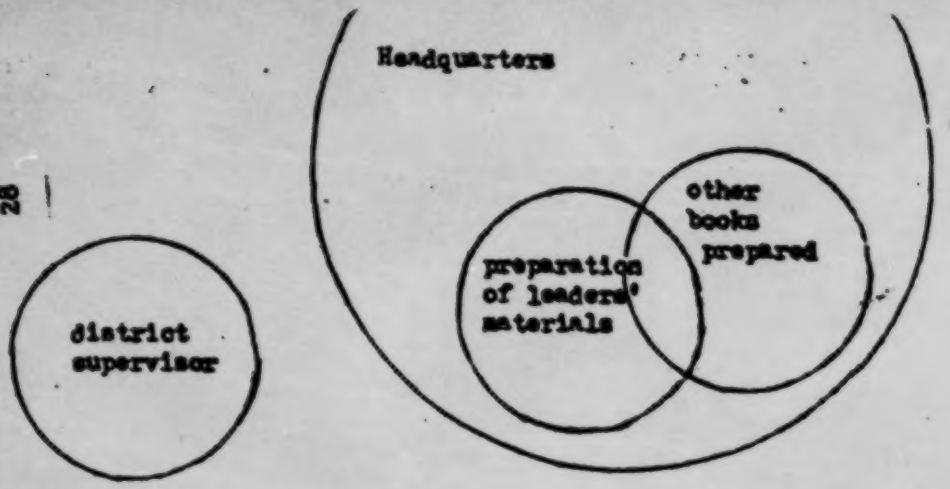
Whenever a meeting of this scene unfolds, the participants sort and re-sort themselves into these classes of persons which form a hierarchy as follows:

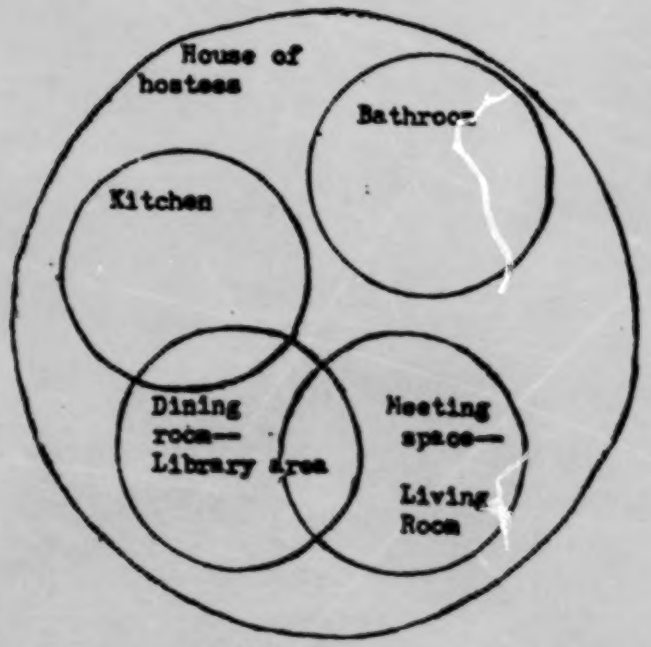


During the different segments of the scene, the visable contrasts between these classes of persons changes slightly. During Social Time there are three and sometimes four groups of interactants: the leader; the other leader(s), who sometimes fall into the category consisting of League mothers and leader applicants; the League mothers and leader applicants; and the new people. During the Formal Introduction there are always two groups: the leader and the other group members. Sometimes the other leader(s) interject comments, and sometimes the leader asks the librarian/treasurer to say something or to collect dues. During the Discussion and Refreshment Time the participants break down into four groups, following the hierarchy as: leader; other leader(s); League mothers and leader applicants; and new people.

Further, the people who regularly meet together for this breastfeeding group divide their environs, depending on what segment of activity they are participating in. The meetings always take place at the home of a League mother who acts as hostess for the series of four meetings. A diagram showing the classes of environs as perceived by the participants follows.

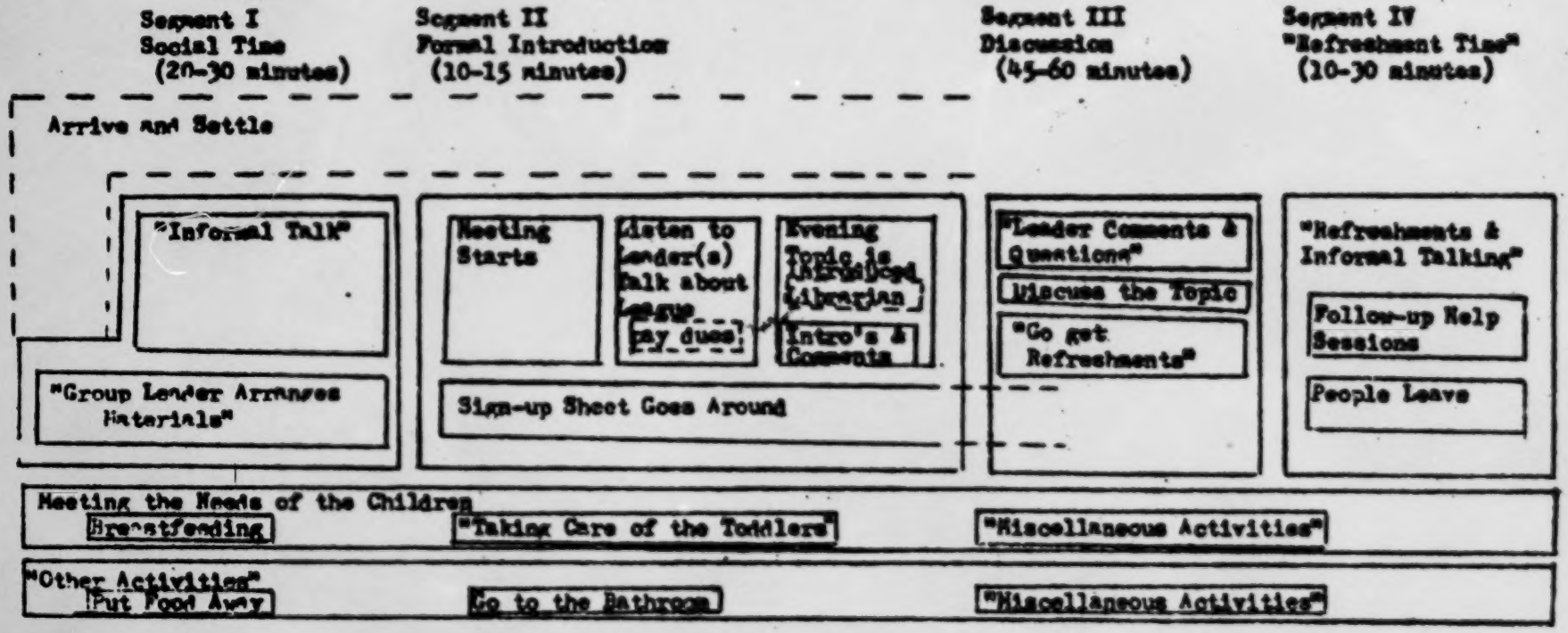
CLASSES OF ENVIRONS AS PERCEIVED BY THE PARTICIPANTS





Finally, all three classes of things can be diagrammed schematically as the microstructure of the scene. Such a schematic structure follows.

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE SCENE AS A MICROSTRUCTURE



Leader	Leader	Leader	Leader
Other Leader(s) League Mo.'s; Leader App.'s	Other Leader(s) or Hostess or Librarian/Treasurer	Other Leader(s) League Mo's; L. App's	Other Leader(s) League Mo's; L. App's
New People	Group Members	New People	New People

Living Room	Living Room	Living Room	Kitchen
Kitchen Bathroom	Kitchen Bathroom	Kitchen Bathroom	Living Room Bathroom

Routines

Now that the scene has been described schematically as a microstructure, the next step is to describe the manifest structure or the routines which make up selected segments. Routines are made up of "moves and answering moves" which will occur in a predictable way once they begin. When a member of the group says or does something in the context of the meeting, the other group members interpret it as a kind of act by a kind of person. It is recognized as a familiar occurance in that context; it is a "move." An "answering move" is the reaction to the "move" by another group member. A "move" is determined to be what it is by the receiver(s) of it and likewise with "answering moves." Each succeeding move and answering move in a routine defines the one before it. You're not sure what exactly it was until it has run its course. A set of moves constitutes a routine and a set of routines in their structural relationship constitutes a segment. The segments in their structural relationship constitute the scene. Seen in this way, the structure of the scene builds from the bottom up. The routine is the level where behaviors get locked in for the whole structure. Hence, there is absolute predictability. If a particular routine gets underway, then a particular segment is getting enacted. This predictability moves up and down within the hierarchy of the structural levels.

To capture routines, a mechanical record of the scene as it unfolds on at least two occasions is necessary. This record can be either audio or video or both. After listening to the tape several times, a schedule is made which is designed to capture the moves and answering moves. The schedule separates the pivotal actor(s) from the others, or the leading actions from the following reactions. All possible moves and answering moves which make

a difference in the selected segment are represented. There is also a place for "other" (a catch-all column) and one for "silence." The schedule should capture who is acting, depending on how the group has sorted itself during the given segment. The acts by the leader, for example, which are identified in the schedule, are those differences in her behaviors which make a difference to the group members as seen by their reactions, or by the way they perceive her acts. Likewise, the acts by the other group members which are identified are those differences in their behaviors which make a difference to the leader(s) as seen in her (their) reactions, or by how she (they) perceive the acts or reactions of the group members.

Sometimes during the unfolding of a routine, something "goes wrong." This is called a "stumble," which is a violation of the structure. A stumble is followed by a break in synchrony, which is usually then followed by some sort of "repair work;" this re-establishes the structure once again. Below, I will describe routines from the Formal Introduction and the Discussion segments, and some stumbles in each.

Segment II: Formal Introduction-- 'Introductions and Comments' Sub-segment

After the leader has completed her formal talk about the League, she introduces the evening topic. The schedule of routines which follows is of the topic "Advantages of Breastfeeding to Mother and Baby." It is the first topic of the series of four. The sub-segment 'Introductions and Comments' proceeds as follows: the leader asks everyone to introduce themselves and to say what they feel the best advantage of breastfeeding is to them. The mother on either the right or the left of the leader begins, and then they go around the room one by one. There is one basic routine in this sub-segment.

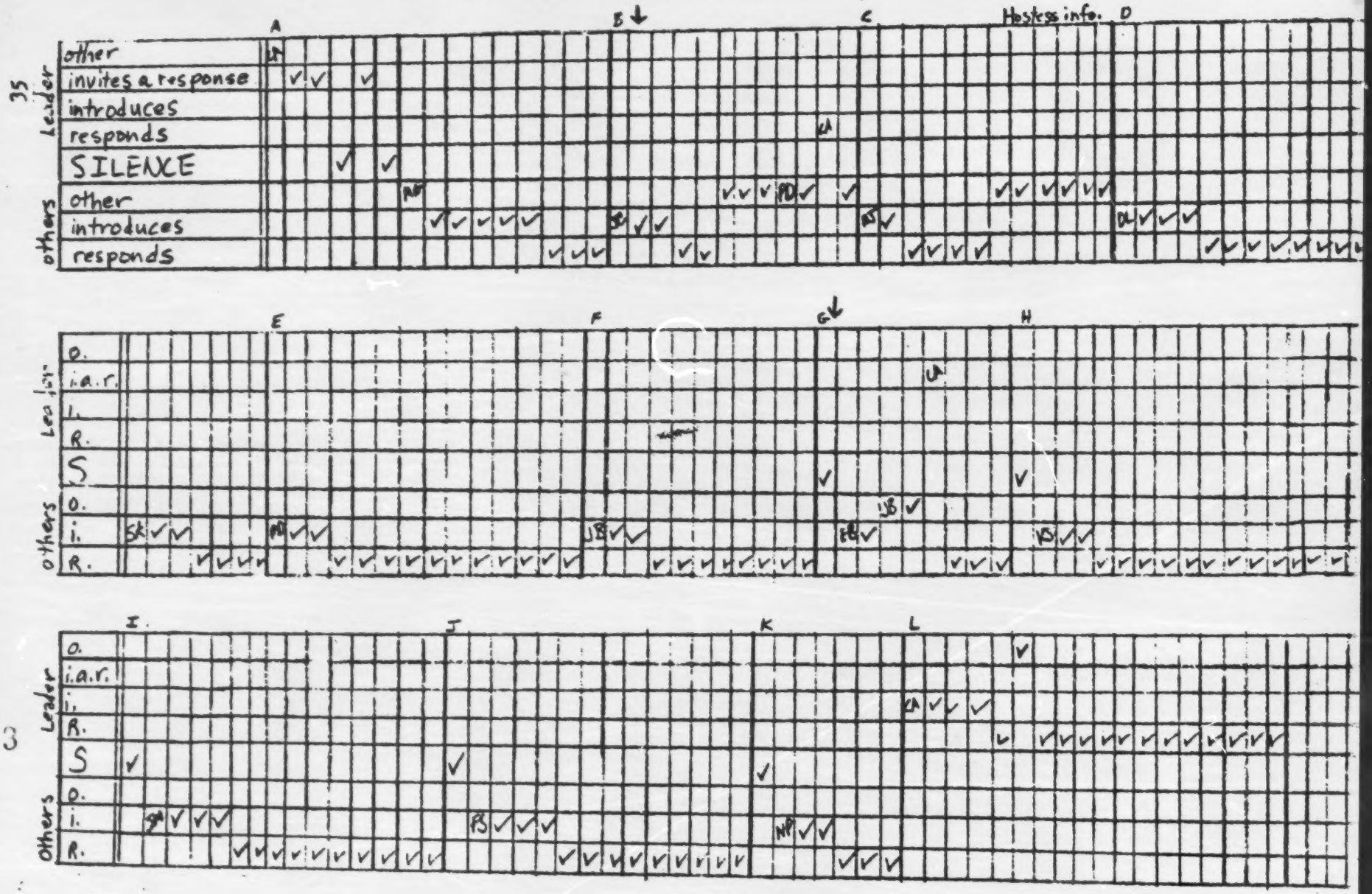
The mother introduces herself, tells the ages of her children, if she has any, and whether or not they were breastfed. If she is pregnant, she tells when her baby is due. Then she tells the group what she feels the best advantage of breastfeeding is to her. This routine is enacted the same way at every meeting, except that what they say after they introduce themselves depends on what the evening topic is. Sometimes the leader may ask for a 'helpful hint' or just a comment. The schedule is designed to capture who acts: initials are used, and lines are drawn between each enactment of the routine, or between each different actor. During this sub-segment, the group is sorted into the leader(s) and the other group members. The hostess also sets herself apart by commenting on where the refreshments and the bathroom are located at the end of her comments--see "C" on the schedule. This particular 'hostess routine' normally occurs.

This particular schedule also captured two "stumbles" which occured on this particular occasion. They are marked with arrows on the schedule. The first one is in section "B" where Joan, a potential leader, is unable to respond with an advantage of breastfeeding. She starts several sentences, then Peg, a League mother who acts as if she were a leader during the meetings (this will be discussed further in the next routine section) gives an advantage for her. Joan starts another sentence, which she is unable to finish, when Connie, the leader, gives an advantage for her. Joan says "thank you," and the next person starts her routine. The leader has personally selected Joan for future leadership even though she has a lot of difficulty speaking in the group. In fact, she never speaks unless she has to. In this case, the leader knew what she wanted to say, so she answered for her.

The other stumble occured in section "C" with the ethnographer. I introduced myself, and made a comment about not having any children yet, but

that if I ever did, I would breastfeed them. The "back-up" leader responded with a comment about my being brainwashed by now and then the leader asked me to respond, which I then did. The structure had been repaired and set straight again, and the routine was completed. The schedule follows.

ROUTINES: INTRODUCTIONS AND COMMENTS SUB-SEGMENT



Segment III: Discussion

'Introductions and Comments' is a transitory sub-segment designed to get the group ready for discussion of the evening topic. The leader, Connie, introduces herself last, says that all the comments were good and responds with her own "advantage." The routines in this segment pretty much follow the introduction of new sub-topics by the leader, so these sub-topics have been divided on the schedule and labeled with letters. During this segment, the members are divided into leader, "back-up" leader, League mothers (and leader applicants), and new people. The schedule divides leader(s) from the other group members. People are identified with initials each time another person starts to talk.

The leader begins the Discussion segment by saying that everyone had talked about breastfeeding as being the best and the healthiest way to feed a baby. She then asked if someone would get more specific and say why they now believed that breast milk was the best milk. The most commonly enacted routine during this segment is as follows: a) the leader introduces a new sub-topic by making a statement and/or by asking a question; b) one or more League mothers then respond; c) if there was a good response, the leader responds to the League mother(s) to clarify the point, or to elaborate on it; d) then one or more League mothers respond again. Moves c and d are optional, or they can repeat themselves depending on the intensity of the discussion of that particular sub-topic. Sections "E," "F," "G," and "J" are good examples. Sections "H" and "I" include only moves a and b.

Another routine occurs in section "B" when a new person, Sally K., responds to the leader's question about why breastfed babies don't get sick as much. Sally K. tells about her baby's allergies and her problems dealing

with it. Jan B., the "back-up" leader asks her some specific questions and Sally responds. Then Jan gives her some information about allergies and breastfeeding. Then Kate, a League mother, responds to Sally. Another League mother, Peg, causes a bit of a stumble by making a definitive statement (something only leaders do). Then the "back-up" leader makes a statement of her own, followed by a statement from the leader. Kate makes a sort of a statement, and then the leader "repairs" the routine's structure with a statement which brings about responses from two of the League mothers. This first topic usually does not bring in too many comments from the new people. They usually listen to the League mothers and leaders tell them about the advantages of breastfeeding.

Peg D., the League mother who acts as if she were a leader, moved here recently from another city where she was the leader of a different sort of mothering group. She is very "sure" of herself and has not yet adapted to the structure of this group. She often "acts like a leader" even though she isn't, and consequently, several stumbles occur during this segment when Peg makes definitive statements instead of just responding with an experience or an opinion. These stumbles are marked with arrows and occur in sections "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F." In each case, a leader responds or makes a statement following Peg's statement. The leaders and League mothers consider Peg to be quite a "problem" and have spent a considerable amount of time discussing what to do to deal with her in their evaluation meetings.

The segment is almost over when in section "E" the leader makes a statement and gets no response. She then asks if anyone has anything else to say. The librarian/treasurer says something about checking out books. Then the leader closes with a routine where she makes a statement about the next meeting and reads a summary quote. Everyone immediately begins to break

up into smaller discussion groups and to go get refreshments for Refreshment Time. The closing routine does not always occur. Usually the Discussion segment just ends when the leader's statements draw no responses.

The mapping of the routines which make up the sub-segments or segments gives us the manifest structure of the scene, earlier described as a microstructure. By mapping routines, strong regularities in behaviors can be identified and located. This is where absolute predictability comes in, and is why the segments of the scene are recognizable to its members. The schedule for the Discussion segment follows.

Social Time and Refreshment Time: Tentative Routines

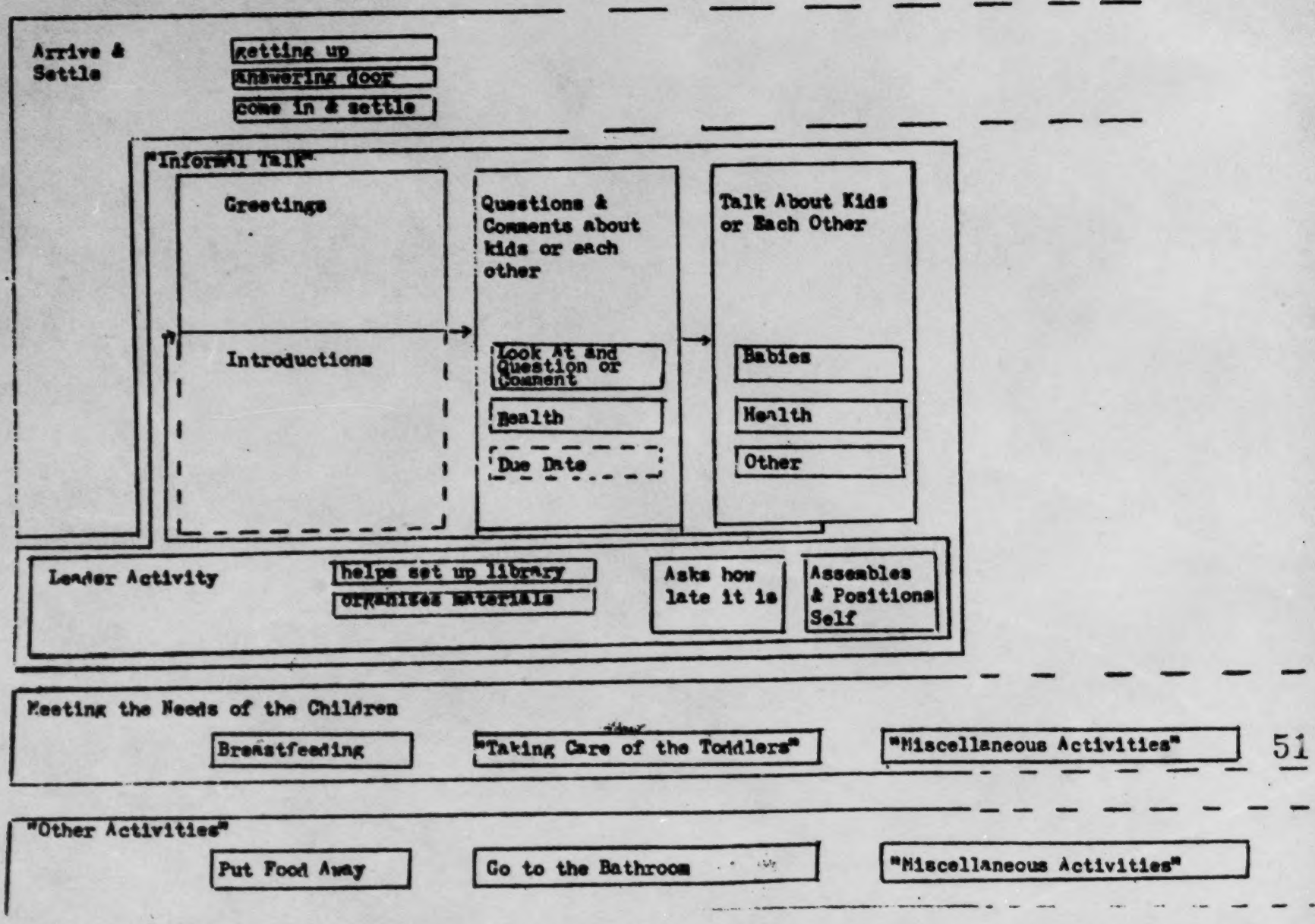
Because of the nature of Social Time and Refreshment Time, it was not possible to obtain an audio recording which would reveal routines. However, these segments are highly regular.

The leader is usually the first to arrive at the home of the hostess. She usually has Joan, the potential leader, with her. She helps to set up the library and arranges her materials while the other mothers arrive one-by-one. The League mothers are more active in conversing with each other and with the new people. Their conversations center on their children or on each other, and are concerned generally with health or related matters. These conversations are highly routinized. League mothers generally all know each other well, so they say their greetings, then ask questions or make comments about their children or about each other and then go into an informal conversation about some aspect of their children or about themselves. Most of the League mothers take the initiative to greet and to introduce themselves to the new people, and the same routine generally follows. In addition, one or two League mothers usually take responsibility for answering the door when people arrive.

The leader's activities are also highly routinized. She may or may not take an active role in greeting, introducing herself and in conversing with the League mothers or the new people while she is organizing her materials. Another routine occurs when she starts the meeting. She asks a League mother, usually a potential leader, what time it is, or how late it is. Then she assembles her materials and positions herself and makes a statement about it being time to start the meeting. Then the Formal Introduction segment starts.

Also, during the Social Time segment, as well as during the whole

meeting, the mothers are breastfeeding their babies, taking care of their toddlers, going to the bathroom, getting a drink, and so on. The diagrammed tentative routines for the Social Time segment follow. The dotted lines indicate that the piece is optional.


Arrive & Settle
getting up
answering door
come in & settle
"Informal Talk"
Greetings
Introductions
Questions & Comments about kids or each other
Look At and Question or Comment
Health
Due Date
Talk About Kids or Each Other
Babies
Health
Other
Leader Activity
helps set up library
organizes materials
Asks how late it is
Assembles & Positions Self
50
Meeting the Needs of the Children
Breastfeeding
"Taking Care of the Toddlers"
"Miscellaneous Activities"
51
"Other Activities"
Put Food Away
Go to the Bathroom
"Miscellaneous Activities"

During Refreshment Time, the mothers break up into smaller sub-groups for more in-depth discussion-conversations. These conversations are informal, and usually center on the mothers specific problems, concerns, or feelings about the topic of the evening. These sub-groups consist of mostly League mothers. If new people are present at the meeting, a leader or League mother will talk with them. If a mother expressed a problem or concern during the meeting, a leader will talk with her about it in more detail at this time. Usually the sub-groups that formed right after the Discussion segment begin breaking up after fifteen or twenty minutes and people start having more informal conversations, going around to other people, or looking at library books before going home.

Businesses-at-Hand

The manifest business-at-hand of the La Leche League is to provide help and encouragement, primarily through personal instruction, to mothers who want to nurse their babies. But it was said that the members of this group were learning much more than just the mechanics of breastfeeding; they are learning a type of total mothering through peer modeling. The leader perceives her primary business-at-hand to be that of 'bringing the mothers around' to the correct way of mothering through discussions and particularly by setting a good example. Once a mother becomes a League mother, she is, in turn, expected to be a good example for other new members.

Mothers who come to the group come because they want to learn how to breastfeed their babies, but they also have other needs as well. Most of them are relatively isolated in their homes. They may also find that they don't have the necessary knowledge available to them about breastfeeding or

about how to care for their babies, and they certainly don't have anyone around them who they can watch. So, they come to the meetings looking for help and support, and seeking information. The mothers who continue to attend the meetings do so because they want the continual support, encouragement and companionship of other mothers who are mothering in this natural and total style. They also begin to find satisfaction in sharing their knowledge and experiences with others. This style of mothering becomes their 'reason to be.'

The way that the mothers are incorporated into the group is revealed in the structure of the segments. During Social Time, the primary business-at-hand is to get acquainted or to socialise and to make new people feel welcome. The Formal Introduction informs the members about the organisation and its procedures. One thing the leader always says is that what the leaders say during the meeting represents the organisation's philosophy, but what the others say is their own opinion. The leader also usually encourages people who have problems or questions to call one of them at any time. Then the 'Introductions and Comments' sub-segment serves to acquaint everyone with who is who. It is during this sub-segment that new people, League mothers and leaders are identified. Also, the comments people make get the group ready for the Discussion segment.

The Discussion segment works in various ways to bring people into the group and to reinforce and give support to the members. The League mothers function to back up the leader(s)' comments with personal experiences, feelings, and information. In this way, they support each other, and model behaviors and philosophy for the new people. The structure of the Discussion segment is also affected by the four rotating topics. The first topic, 'The

Advantages of Breastfeeding to Mother and Baby' usually is discussed by the leaders and the League mothers for the benefit of the new people. If the leader knows that a particular new person has a specific problem, she will discuss it and elicit appropriate responses from the League mothers to 'bring that mother around.' The discussion of the second topic, 'The Art of Breastfeeding and Overcoming Difficulties) is usually dominated more by the new people talking about their problems, and League mothers and leaders trying to respond with positive statements. By the third topic, 'Baby Arrives: the Family and the Breastfed Baby,' the new people feel more comfortable talking about their experiences. They are given support by the others, and the discussions are more equally balanced between the new people and the other members. The fourth topic, 'Nutrition and Weaning,' is again more balanced discussion-wise, but the leaders and League mothers take a more active role in making suggestions for better nutrition. They all bring natural foods-type refreshments also. By the end of the four topic series, the new people who are still attending the meeting feel more like they are a part of the group. At this time, the leader meets with them separately (often a social visit) to discuss being a League mother, as well as any particular questions or problems the mother may have. This serves to cement the relationship between the new person and the leader, as well as to help lock in the roles of the 'classes of persons.'

The Discussion segment also works in other ways to lock in the group's structure. Many of the same comments, experiences, feelings and the like are repeated over and over again by the leaders and the League mothers. In a sense, they are building up a body of oral tradition which they are passing on and modeling for the new members. This helps to bring the new members in

to the group, as well as to give support to the other members. This 'building up of a body of oral tradition' also tends to lock in behaviors within the routines. That is, when one particular League mother tells about a certain experience, another particular League mother tells about another certain experience, and so on. The leader soon learns that certain statements about certain sub-topics on her part will bring about certain statements from the League mothers. If her statements fail to elicit the desired "tellings of experiences" from the League mothers, she will specifically ask for them.

The Refreshment Time activities reinforce the businesses-at-hand of the other segments, only on a finer level. Leaders and League mothers get to know each other better, and also get to know the new people better, as well as model the appropriate behaviors for them. They are always breastfeeding and tending their children so that the appropriate behaviors are always there for all to see. The leaders are always observant of mothering behaviors and will give pointers or make suggestions when necessary. If someone is having real problems, the leader will discuss it with the League mothers at the evaluation meeting so that at the next meeting they will be prepared with the necessary strategies to help her. There is a constant effort to provide a positive example so that new people can see that learning how to mother successfully is possible with the help and guidance of the more experienced.

League mothers, and especially leaders sometimes tend to compete with each other in a sense to accomplish these businesses-at-hand in trying to be the "best" mother, and in getting acknowledgement for it. Those League mothers who win the acknowledgement of being a "good mother" from the leader, often become potential leaders. The leader personally attends to the mother who becomes a potential leader. She socializes with her frequently, and guides

her through her mothering experiences. This is demonstrated in the 'Introductions and Comments' sub-section where the leader answers for Joan, the potential leader who had difficulty responding. In a sense, the leader mothers the potential leader on a one-to-one basis, where the group functions to 'mother the mothers' peer wise as well as experience/inexperienced wise in a public, group sense.

Certainly not everyone who comes to one or even two meetings keeps coming. Many people are "turned off" by the philosophy or by the modeling behaviors themselves. Some people don't feel they need to be "mothered" in that way, and simply want some information. When they find there is more to it than just getting information, they stop coming.

Occasionally, a mother like Peg, the League mother who "acts as if she were a leader" throws the structure out of kilter. Instead of learning how to mother and then "mothering the mothers," she dictates to them. New people as well as some League mothers and leaders get discouraged. The meetings don't "go well," and no one really knows what to do about it. Ethnography of this kind can help in this regard by identifying the routines and the "damaging" pieces so that the leaders and League mothers can take appropriate action to remedy the situation.

This study is, at this point, incomplete. At least two other scenes should be investigated and analyzed in this same manner so that it can be seen whether the same assumptions are enacted in the other contexts. Those assumptions were that the conditions of our society make it difficult, if not impossible, for women to learn how to mother correctly without the support and assistance of other experienced and successful mothers. Further, that some women are better mothers than others and so provide better models and have more to contribute to those who are inexperienced.

SECTION V

MASS FORCES AND LIFE CAREERS

In this type of ethnography, Science II as it is called, there are only five things in the world of which cognizance is taken. First, there are scenes, which are particular kinds of face-to-face encounters in which groups of people regularly come together and disperse. One such scene, a breastfeeding group, has been described here. Secondly, scenes are connected together in complex ways which results in sets of connected scenes. In regard to these first two things, the intent is to describe structure, resulting in a description of the scene as a microstructure and as a macrostructure, or the connections between scenes in some arena. This methodology is also concerned with process. The identification of routines will reveal to us something about interactional constraints, which are reciprocal and interpersonal processes. They show how interactions "lock" people in to the overriding structure; hence, they are responsible for maintaining stability and the status quo.

Two other processes with which this methodology is concerned are those of mass forces and life careers. Mass forces are those forces of history in which unconnected behaviors or events "snowball" to evoke more behaviors of a certain kind. They are discrete actions and/or behaviors which pile up and cause other things of that kind to happen. Gearing uses the example of the economics of the marketplace, with the snowballing effect being inflation. The other process is that of life careers. People move through social systems in non-random and complicated, but mappable ways. As mass forces operate,

they operate to change the way people move through those social systems. So this type of ethnography seeks to discover those mass forces which are impacting to change the movement of people through the social system(s) under scrutiny. These mass forces are determining who shows up for induction into them. Hence, the ethnographer is interested in the incidence in which newcomers are presenting themselves to certain scenes for induction.

The structure of the scene has to re-populate itself--there has to be a built-in way for newcomers to be inducted and then go through a mini-life career of sorts to become an old hand in that scene. These people who are showing up at these scenes will be inducted into the scene and/or the scene will be changed by them. Interactional constraints are the processes by which people "walk each other through" the scene. It is done conjointly. Stumbles are the observable record of this process; repair work takes place to re-establish the structure. People in these routinized situations lock each other into the scene and conjointly work their way through it. There is a dynamic between the mass forces and the interactional constraints which tends to keep things in place. The interactional constraints act to keep change slow and deliberate; mass forces act to make things change faster. They act to change the rate of people showing up for induction into certain scenes. As the number of people showing up changes, so does the structure of the scene. Interactional constraints, through routines, lock in the structure from the bottom up.

It was said earlier that the breastfeeding group with which this study is concerned is viewed as being part of a modern-day revitalistic movement, following Margaret Mead's theory and writings. La Leche League began in the late 1950's, as a reaction against the trends of the times towards formulas,

anaesthesia, bottles, and the schedules and discipline of the currectly popular childrearing theories. Breastfeeding during this time was not very poolular. It was the minority of women who were involved in this move toward total mothering.

Margaret Mead wrote that it is at the point of recent breakdown of postfigurative societies made up of three generation households to cofigurative societies made up of two generation households that nativistic or revitalistic movements flourish. The United States, especially after World War II, was undergoing rapid changes in education and in job opportunities, all of which contributed to the general breakdown of the traditional relationships between those who refused to conform (for reasons of race, education, social isolation, or because of personal choice) (Mead 1978:57). Peer modeling was becoming the dominant mode with the breakdown in cultural continuity between generations. La Leche League had its origin during this era as an attempt to re-establish for all time a desired way of life, the central characteristic of which depended on the inseparable tie between mother and baby. Breastfeeding was the means to regain that lost connection. A whole style of total mothering then developed with complete breastfeeding at the center of the philosophy and lifestyle. These mothers were trying to re-establish some traditional elements and lifestyles into their culture by their emphasis on mother and baby and on the family as a whole.[3]

Ralph Linton and Anthony F. C. Wallace have both written about nativistic or revitalistic movements, but their emphasis was on culture contact between two cultures or societies where there is a common denominator of inequality derived either from the attitudes of the societies involved or from actual situations of dominance and submission (Linton 1943:234). The type of

revitalization movement that this paper is concerned with is one which took place in a highly complex society, the United States, which was undergoing extremely rapid culture change due to a rapid increase in technology with its dramatic effects, and the emergence of a world community. Nonetheless, the Linton and Wallace literature is very pertinent. Linton defined nativistic movements as, "any concious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture" (Linton 1943: 230). He then says that

> Conscious, organized efforts to perpetuate a culture can arise only when a society becomes consious that there are cultures other than its own and that the existence of its own culture is threatened. Such consciousness in turn, is a by-product of close and continuous contact with other societies; an acculturation phenomenon under the [above] definition. . . . (Linton 1943:238).

It is argued here that the same phenomenon applies to the situation in our complex, industrialized class society in which La Leche League had its beginnings.

Linton went on to describe the various forms of nativistic or revitalistic movements, which were seen as either revivalistic (attempting to revive the past culture) or perpetuative (attempting to perpetuate the current culture). Further, they could be distinguished as either magical or rational. Magical nativistic movements originate with an individual who assumes the role of prophet, lean heavily on the supernatural and usually embody apocalyptic and millenial aspects. Moribund elements of culture are revived as part of a magical formula designed to modify the society's environment in favorable ways. Rational nativistic movements are described by contrasting rational

revivalistic and rational perpetuative nativistic movements. Rational revivalistic nativistic movements are almost always

> . . . associated with frustrating situations and are primarily attempts to compensate for the frustrations of the society's members. The elements revived become symbols of a period when the society was free or, in retrospect, happy or great. . . . By keeping the past in mind, such elements help to reestablish and maintain the self respect of the group's members in the face of adverse conditions. Rational perpetuative nativistic movements, on the other hand, find their main function in the maintainance of social solidarity. The elements selected for perpetuation become symbols of the society's existence as a unique entity. They provide the society's members with a fund of common knowledge and experience which is exclusively their own and which sets them off from the members of other societies. In both types of rational revivalistic movement the culture elements selected for symbolic use are chosen realistically and with regard to the possiblity of perpetuating them under current conditions (Linton 1943: 233-234).

Wallace, in his article, "Revitalization Movements," also discusses the concept of revitalization and outlines the processual dimensions of revitalization movements. But following Linton's terms, it is argued here that La Leche League initially arose as a rational revivalistic nativistic movement, and then with the next generation of mothers in the 1970's, became a rational perpetuative type nativistic movement, which it still is at this time. It is also argued that this change from revivalistic to perpetuative corresponded to the beginnings of what Margaret Mead called prefigurative culture. While the

founding mothers of La Leche League may have been trying to reestablish some traditional elements into their culture, the generation of women who were adolescents in the turbulent 1960's and who became mothers in the 1970's, were much more uncertain of their times. They adopted the elements revived by the previous generation of La Leche League mothers and turned them into symbols of their existence as a unique entity. The most fundamental of these symbols is now the insignia of La Leche League, that of a mother suckling her child. They are attempting to build a body of oral tradition and to induct other young mothers into their groups so that they can reestablish and maintain these social solidarity.

> . . . I believe we are on the verge of developing a new kind of culture. . . . I call this new style prefigurative, because in this new culture it will be the child--and not the parent or grandparent that represents what is to come. Instead of the erect, white-haired elder who, in postfigurative cultures, stood for the past and the future in all their grandeur and continuity, the unborn child, already conceived but still in the womb, must become the symbol of what life will be like. This is a child whose sex and appearance and capabilities are unknown. This is a child who may be a genius or may suffer from some deep impairment, but who will need imaginative, innovative, and dedicated adult care far beyond any we give today.
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> . . .
>
> . . . But knowing what we do not know and cannot predict, we can construct an environment in which a child, still unknown, can be safe and can grow and discover itself and the world (Mead 1978:83-84).

This quote summarizes well the situation in our society which the mothers of the breastfeeding group are confronting. Mead is talking about teaching ourselves how to alter adult behavior so we can give up the postfigurative type of upbringing with its cofigurative elements, and learn prefigurative ways of teaching and learning. She is talking about creating open systems focussing on the future, and hence, on children. The location of the future must be changed: we must re-shape our thinking, according to Mead, to see "the future as now." So, in attempting to cope with these realities, the second generation of La Leche League mothers adapted the revivalistic elements of their organization, perpetuating the idea of the mother-child bond through breastfeeding in an attempt to create the best possible environment for their children so they would be prepared for the world they would have to live in.

The processes of mass forces and life careers is this very stuff. The 1960's brought a decade of youth revolt and activism; women moved into the labor force, and feminism became more organized and effective. The mothers in this breastfeeding group were all young adults during this decade and they all talk about the effects it had on their lives. These 'mass forces' brought them all together to be inducted into this particular scene.

They refer to themselves sometimes as "left-over hippies;" most of them had no real models available to them as children for the kind of natural lifestyle they saw for themselves as young adults. Through the La Leche League group, they each found out that this type of lifestyle was possible and that there were other people who lived the way they thought was right. They all say that it was the support they found in the group, and being able to see other mothers who were successfully raising their children in this way that kept them coming to the meetings. The meetings became a way to

"re-charge their batteries" so they could continue to handle the realities of their lives. They all had gone to college; several had taken graduate courses. They all had worked before they had had their first baby.

The leader, Connie, described her upbringing and attendence at a private Catholic college as "strict." When she later attended a state university in the late 1960's and early 1970's, her newly gained freedom took over. She became involved in the Students for a Democratic Society organization, and participated in other revolutionary activities. School was no longer meaningful to her, so she dropped out and "drifted" for awhile. She started living with her boyfriend, and they moved to a southern state for a few years. Work to them was a way to get money to do what they wanted to do; it was never a "career." Connie says she never liked kids. Then after she became pregnant, she realized that she "was totally responsible for making a perfect person." She read a lot, stopped smoking, and began living a completely natural lifestyle. She had a sister in La Leche League, and thought of her as being really "far out" for nursing her baby for two years. Then the isolation of motherhood drew her to the meetings, and the idea of total mothering through breastfeeding just "grew" with her as she did it. She wanted to go back to work, but just couldn't bring herself to do it. Then she got pregnant again. The leader of the La Leche League group (leaders always being on the "lookout" for potential leader applicants) talked to her about becoming a leader. She had been looking for something in her life to make her feel that she was doing something important--something that centered on children, where she could be in touch with other people, and the La Leche League was it. Being a good mother had always been a struggle for Connie, but the group helped.

The other League mothers express similar feelings. Most of them saw other mothers bottle feeding their babies, and knew they didn't want to do

it that way. Most of them say that they wanted to be mothers, but that it was their husbands who weren't ready—so they waited until their mid-to-late twenties to start their families. They say that mothering this way has fulfilled their sexuality, and made them aware of and comfortable with their bodies. They believe that total mothering is very feminist because of this. The transition from viewing their breasts as a way to feed a baby and not as sexual objects brought about a change in the way they perceived themselves, and as Connie summed it up, "biologically, mothering is what we were meant for. That's our lot in life, and we're lucky." They all agree that mothering has matured them and made them feel more confident about themselves.

Although this style of mothering has the effect of dividing work by sex, (the women stay home and take care of the house-related duties while the men work outside the home) they all agree that most of them do not have traditional relationships in many ways. Their husbands have to support them so they can mother the way that they do, but they help with the household work also. Housework takes a secondary role to that of mothering, however, and a clean house is not an essential thing, although they do express the need for reassurance from their husbands that it's all right not to have things clean and neat. To sustain this type of lifestyle, the work is necessarily divided by sex.

All of these League mothers also talk about their husbands, and the changes in their relationships when their babies were born. They say that mothering this way "stretches them thin" sometimes, but they still have to give their husbands extra attention so they "won't start resenting the baby." Still, it is the mother/child bond that is of primary importance. They see their husbands going through a parallel transition into adulthood when the

first baby is born. They change from "needing to be mothered or babied" themselves into manhood, where they can give support to the mother/child relationship. "Total fathering" is also encouraged as much as possible. There are several mothers who are single parents, and for them the problems of coping are much more difficult. Most of them live on welfare, and get the needed support and encouragement from the group members.

Most of the mothers talk about resuming careers or work after their families are grown, but this work is usually seen as an extension of being a mother. They want their work to fit into their lives, not be something external to them. Social work, welfare work, and teaching are commonly discussed and in fact, are pursued by many retired leaders and former members of the group. Some don't return to jobs at all, however. Connie doesn't see herself ever going back to work when her children grow up. She says she'd rather be really poor than work.

Right now, mothering consumes their time and their identities. It is their way of doing something important and meaningful, and the group gives them the necessary support and cohesion to make their lifestyles possible. These mothers came to this group, commonly affected by the mass forces of thier times, and had had similar experiences in their life careers. Now they are mothering each other through their life careers of motherhood, and they are making learning how to mother a much easier and much more secure experience in the unpredictable and rapidly changing times in which we all live. These women are dedicated to total motherhood through breastfeeding as the way to a better, more desired way of life.

When your child is born, you devote yourself unstintingly to meeting his needs; you nurse him when he is hungry and hold him

snug and close and warm as long as he needs and likes it. As he grows, he wants less snuggle and more sociability; you prop him up in the midst of the family from time to time and go about your business of cooking or whatever--never getting too far away, so that when his brief spurt of "independence" has spent itself, you can welcome him back to the haven of mother's arms. As the days and weeks and months go by, he becomes more independent in other ways; he starts eating solid foods and does not nurse so long or so often. Soon he not only accepts the food you put in his mouth, but picks up bits of food to bring them to his mouth himself. And one day, lo: he is feeding himself, handling a spoon with dignity and aplomb, albeit with occasional spectacular messes. Now he is drinking milk from a cup and taking no more than a friendly nightcap from the breast, except when trouble with teething, or a bump from adventuring, or a cold coming on, makes him seek the solace of the same old familiar comfort. You are still there when he needs you. There is never an abrupt withdrawal of your love as expressed first through the warmth and closeness of nursing and later in other ways. Secure in knowing that he can retreat for a bit into babyhood if he wants to, he ventures further and further into childhood, and finally (all too soon it seems in retrospect), he isn't a baby any more, but a big boy; he eats at the family table and enjoys the family meals. In the not too distant future, he will be trudging off to school with his lunchbox. And far down the years you catch a misty glimpse of him as he struggles with those first uncertain meals prepared by his young bride, and later still as he watches with pride as his son gets his good beginning in life at her breast (La Leche League International 1958:139-140).

FOOTNOTE:

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

The structure of this breastfeeding group is still "under construction." No system is changeless; all cultural systems undergo changes in their structures as new people come into scenes and are incorporated and as other people leave the scene to go on to others. This cultural system has changed from when I first started observing it in September. The old leader, who had been a "back-up" leader retired from the League and went back to work; new people have joined. The "new people" in September are now League mothers. A leader applicant was turned down as a leader and has resigned herself to being a League mother again. A new mothering group formed; it is made up of mothers from this breastfeeding group and some from a religious cult group. Now, the scene is about to undergo more drastic changes. The leader and one of the potential leaders and their families are moving away to "get back to the land" and live a more rural, quiet life in a southern state. Possibly they will join a group down there, or start a new one. The "back-up" leader, Jan, is taking over as leader, and the potential leader, Joan (the one who has trouble talking in the group), is taking over as "back-up" leader. Consequently, the routines are changing; the structure is changing. This study should be continued, and an attempt should be made to map out two more scenes in order to learn more about this process of change--starting at the level of interactional constraints. There is also the issue of what Gearing terms pattern replication to be investigated. That is where many scenes are closely interconnected by overlapping kinds of linkages, their business-at-hand start to resemble each other in their underlying

structures, such that one scene will replicate in microcosm the wider community. An investigation of the other, newly formed mothering group should serve as a good starting point.

Science II is a methodology for describing a single system as a small whole, for mapping it as a structure. But the connected systems can also be mapped out, and hence, a small community can be described, from the routines within scenes to the mass forces operating to affect them.

Efforts are also underway to merge this mode of sciencing with cross-cultural studies, with this form of ethnographic investigation representing a sort of case study. The merging point, or area of overlap lies perhaps in mass forces. For example, Margaret Mead's theory where a change in household type from extended to nuclear family households brings about a change in infant feeding practices which in turn brings about revitalization movements, can be tested cross-culturally. The Science II ethnography of the breastfeeding group reflects a case study example.

Perhaps the most significant application of Science II methodology and structural mapping lies in the area of intervention strategies. Once routines have been delineated in a scene, it becomes possible to isolate the damaging pieces of activity within the routine(s). A "cure" can then be developed whereby the pivotal actor(s) can prevent the routine from running its course by replacing it with another one which is already there. The ethnographer can show how the "problems" can be rectified by identifying the switching behaviors between routines and by suggesting which routine(s) to replace. Armed with this knowledge, pivotal actor(s) in any scene are able to interrupt these processes and improve the liklihood of accomplishing their businesses-at-hand.

NOTES:

1 Margaret Mead has described this extensively in Culture and Commitment: The New Relationships in the 1970's (1978) where she describes her concepts of postfigurative, cofigurative and prefigurative culture. I will describe and apply these concepts in more detail later.

2 For this information, I have relied on the major handbook of the La Leche League, The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding (1958).

3 The La Leche League was formed in 1957 by seven women in Franklin Park, Illinois. The idea for the La Leche League was born at a Christian Family Movement picnic. The major objective of the organization was to bring mother and baby together again through complete breastfeeding. The La Leche League publication, The LLLove Story (1977) describes the beginnings of the League.

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